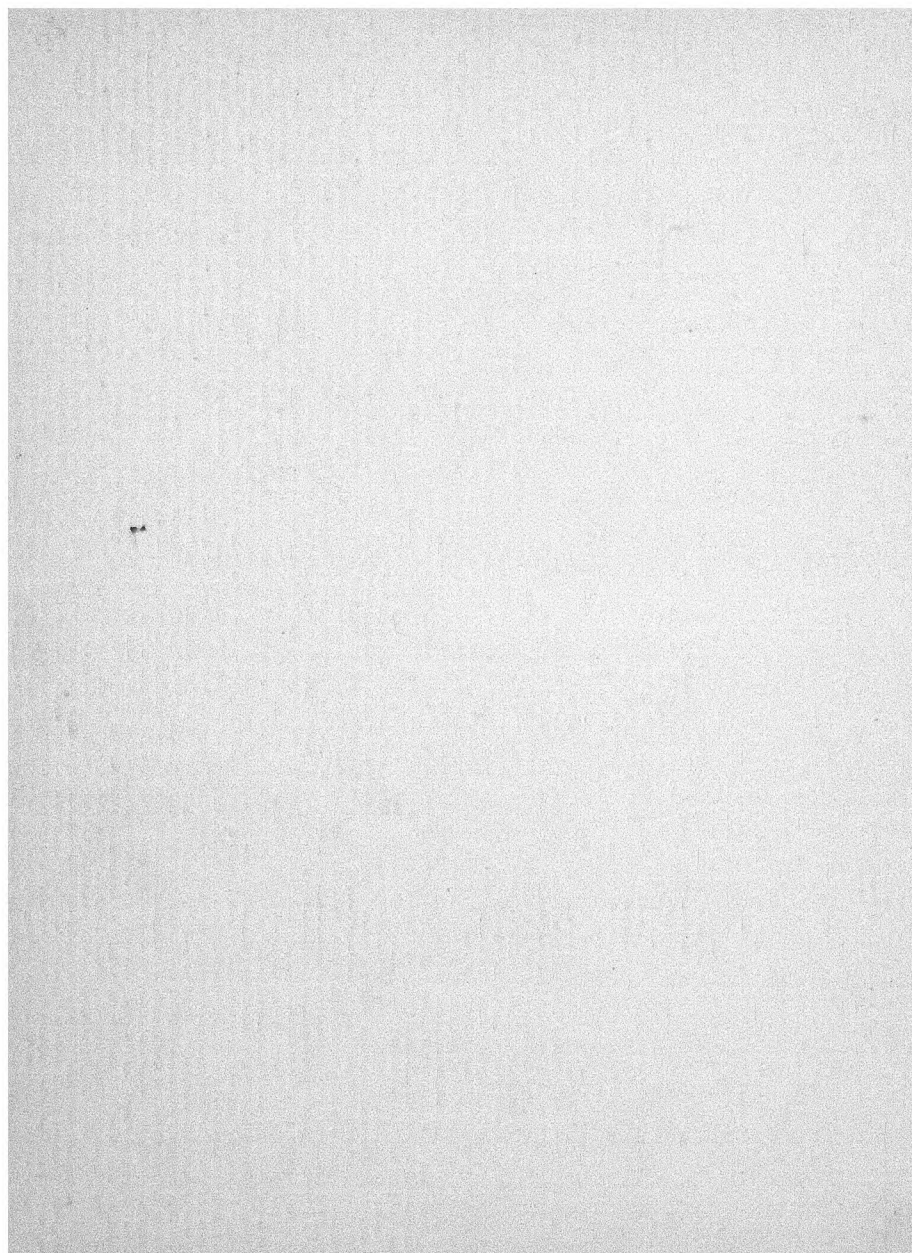


SUPERSTITION
IN THE
TWILIGHT

A. KRISTJANSSON



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SUPERSTITION IN THE TWILIGHT



By
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"Austur í Blámóðu Fjalla"
"Svipleiftur Samtöðarmanna"
Etc.

THE COLUMBIA PRESS LTD.,
WINNIPEG, 1929.

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Second Edition.

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*Give me the splendid silent sun
With all his beams full-dazzling.—
Give me solitude.
Give me Nature, give me again,
O Nature, your primal sanities.*

*I was looking a long while for a clue to
the history of the past, for myself and for
these chants—and now I have found it.
It is not in the paged fables in the libraries.*

—Walt Whitman.

*Did belief in Fairies create
Suspicion and Superstition?*

SINCE the beginning of our so-called "history," there have been many experiments with reformation, to assist in the process of evolution.

The pilgrims from lands near and far—from lands across the ocean—which are now attempting to amalgamate into one nation, into one family on this continent of North America. They should study these experiments of past generations carefully.

The American people of the North American continent (by American people I refer to the Indians and Eskimos of North America and Greenland), should know as much as possible—as much as story and textbooks will permit—about the reforms that were accomplished in the old world, before the Icelandic and Norse Vikings landed on this continent. The reforms that were accomplished before the famous Scarlet Letter Missionaries, pilgrims and merchants landed on the east coast.

The American Indians owe it to the foreigners that emigrate to North America, in the hope of finding happiness in the light of the stars. The Indians should never forget to show due respect to the homeless visitors, whosoever they may be, indifferent to color or creed.

The leaders of those movements for reform, made great sacrifice. When the Catholic is trying to forgive LUTHER, he should remember that the German scholar was not the only one that demanded the privilege to pray wherever he "damn" pleased.

It should not be forgotten, how much the pioneers on this continent were benefited by the fact that education was somewhat advanced amongst the nations that "came across" so that suspicion and superstition were not so general, did not hold the "common" people with the same relentless brutal autocratic power, as during the early part of "history," or the so-called middle ages.

In the days of the Norse-Icelandic Vikings and the Scarlet Letter Pilgrims, individuals and nations were suspicious of each other, and each others methods and motives. The nations of the twentieth century are not entirely free from this

disagreeable burden. — Nevertheless the statesmen that make history (so interesting, and conduct the intelligence test), are not spending as many sleepless nights in trembling fear, as they did two or three centuries ago, and the humble farmer is somewhat more secure. There is not the same danger that the pirate or the Berserker is coming around during the night, robbing his garden, and stealing his sheep and cattle.

Few of us are entirely free from superstition. Probably there are some who are so fortunate as to have thrown this burden off their shoulders. However that may be, suspicion will linger, even in the open spaces, and suspicion is sometimes a very detrimental influence in our lives—in our common daily activities.

II.

ONE of the far-reaching influences on the religious and intellectual activities of mankind in the early days, was the profound belief in all kinds of fairies.

In some of the old records of mythology, all the mysterious forces of the universe

were personified. The Sun and the Moon, and the sea were persons, or they were under control of "individuals"—independent gods. According to the old belief.

"To the wind salutation,
To the sun salutation,
To the wind salutation,
To the moon salutation,
To the wind salutation
To the earth salutation,
To the wind salutation,
To the stars salutation."

And it was a very wide spread belief, that the forces in the universe could be used for punishment or reward on individuals and nations. "A miracle is an act which creates faith." The only thing that was necessary for the "aerial lawyers" in possession of these great powers, was to tell the rulers, the Sun and the Moon, etc., what they wanted them to do. If somebody was to be punished, just a little change in aerial power, or weather condition was necessary, and punishment or reward would be forthcoming, without delay. Strange as it may seem this belief finds an expression in the poetry of "modern" times.

A star looks down at me
And says: Here I and you
Stand each in our degree,
What do you mean to do?—
Mean to do? —

I say for all I know,
Wait and let time go by
Till my change come—"Just so."
The star says, "So mean I.
So mean I."

—Thomas Hardy.

The dwarf, or gnome, were not exactly in the class of the fairies. They were supposed to be lonely bachelors who inhabited certain queer and curious types of rocks.

The dwarf was very short. Probably similar in physical form to the little folks that were supposed to have inhabited Peru, or certain parts of Central and South America.

Of all the different types of fairies that we used to read about, the dwarfs had the greatest skill as artists and engineers. What did they do? They were exceedingly clever in designing and building ships. If you were on friendly terms with them, your

future success as a trawler would be accomplished. There was nothing to worry about. It was sometimes a very dangerous adventure, for those who attempted unaided, to find the dwarfs.

Like all artists who mix colors, or record the vibrating sound from the open spaces into music, or carve wood, the dwarf was very particular about his friends. He was indeed very difficult to please. He would rather be isolated and lonesome among his rocks, than to accept companions that he did not like.

The magic sword, made by the dwarf, was in great demand. Before guns and gunpowder were invented. The magic sword contained an ointment in its handle which, if applied in time, healed all wounds.

One reason for the dwarfs being so particular about their friends, may have been that they all wanted him to do something for them that he had not done for anyone else. Not only that, but they sometimes forced the dwarf—according to what the fairy tales inform us—to make ships or something, to aid them immediately in their adventure and conquest. The dwarf could

build ships that would sail anywhere, indifferent to weather conditions. He was so clever in building airships. In other words, the dwarf, as it seems, was the first of all the earthly tribes to control the waves.

The trolls were different, tall, stout and very powerful. They lived in caves, and it was commonly understood that they were cannibals. Some of the trolls had a very queer physical and mental make-up. They could not go anywhere in the daytime. If they failed to get into their caves before sunrise in the morning, they would turn into stone. Not salt, the trolls were not like Mrs. Lot.

It is not unlikely that someone is curious to know the reason for this phenomenon. I am not in a position to throw much light, or to give any reliable information about the mental make-up of the trolls.

It seems likely that many of the trolls were ghost worshippers. Some of the ghosts in the early days were evil doers, and they would not permit the trolls to see the sun or go anywhere in the daytime.

I cannot remember having ever seen recorded that the trolls (ever) built houses.

Therefore, they had no choice, they were forced to live in natural created caves. Some of those caves were deep and dark, and the walls were covered with moss. Sometimes there was water running in those caves, or dripping through the ceiling or roof, or through the walls.

III.

THE most interesting type of fairies, very much different from the dwarf and the troll, were what the Scandinavians used to call "Huldufolk." They had culture and refinement, and if you did them a favor, and if they trusted you, they would become most trustworthy and loyal friends—according to the fairy tales. And many of them were beautiful, with culture, which they expressed in many ways. They had their own religion, and they were very fond of music. The song services, conducted by the "Huldufolk" in the hills and rocks, were famous. When the shepherd boy or girl were lost in the fog in the mountains, they sometimes heard them singing. And some of the old people were especially favored by being entertained by song services, conducted by rock fairies. That is to say, if they visited the hills and mountains.

That the belief in those rock and hill
fairies influenced the intellectual and religious life in many lands, directly and indirectly, no one familiar with the facts will doubt.

The following poem, of recent date, a translation from the old Norse, will give an idea about the influence created by belief in fairies:

My grandmother thus cautioned me

On Sundays never go—
In play, to yonder Church-hill
When the sun is sinking low,
You might disturb the service
When the gentle fairies pray.
Their church is up in yonder knoll,
And in my youthful day,
I seemed to hear the fairy hymns
Floating out at sunset.

On Sundays when the mountain tops
Reflect the afterglow,
Though chimes from Church-hill tempt
thee,

I pray thee do not go,
For thou wilt not recover
From their weird and mystic sway;
But in thy ears reverberate
Until thy dying day,
Those ever-luring elfin bells
Calling thee at sunset.

Nearly every child loves to have someone tell a fairy tale. I do not know if the story of the beginning of the first fairies is “familiar”—or if that interesting story was ever taught in Sunday schools?

Eve was expecting Jehovah to “pay” a visit to the family, a kind of inspection trip. According to what we read in the Jewish history he did make such earthly journeys frequently.

Eve was trying to prepare her many children for Jehovah’s visit. She did not have much help, no maid service. Adam had many interests, he was an adventurer—an explorer, very often away from home.

Taking care of Eden was not an easy task. Eve and Adam being the first of creation, Adam did not find much opportunity to get any help. Every once in a while he succeeded in training dogs and birds to do him some favor. Eve was just as interested in travelling and exploring as her husband. Regions unknown fascinated her.

To make matters more difficult for Eve, Jehovah changed his time-table. He, therefore, came to Eden much sooner than Eve had expected. She was clever and did her work well, but she could not finish her

housekeeping duties before Jehovah arrived. Her children were not prepared. Eve, however, tried to be a little diplomatic. She did the wrong thing, made the wrong move, she attempted the impossible in trying to deceive Jehovah.

As Eve had only been a short time here on this planet, family experience or family tradition was wisdom and support unknown to her. She had faith in Jehovah, but she could not learn how wise and powerful He was. Eve, the first mother, attempted to hide some of her children. Needless to explain that was the very greatest mistake she could have made.

When Jehovah arrived in the Garden of Eden, he did not seem to be in a sweet or pleasant humor. He did not even look at the children that were present, nicely dressed. With their ears clean, and shining blue and brown eyes. He immediately asked for those children whom Eve had tried to hide. When she explained to Him why she was hiding them, He became very angry, and would not even listen. And then He made a vow or enchantment, "THAT INASMUCH AS EVE HAD ATTEMPTED TO HIDE SOME OF HER CHILDREN FROM HIM, THEY SHOULD BE FOREVER HIDDEN FROM MAN."

IV.

THE children that Eve wanted to hide from the light and wisdom of God, should be forever hidden from man. And that was the beginning of the mysterious fairies, occupying hills and rocks, about which so many interesting stories and poems have been written.

“Once a dainty lady,
Evidently queen,
Wore a gown of shady
Moonshine and green,
With a lace of gleaming
Starlight that sent
All dewdrops dreaming
Everywhere she went.”

Some of the boys and girls are not yet liberated from the enchantment of Jehovah. They seem to like to keep up the old habit, attempting to hide from the Creator, like the fairies that are hidden from men. Probably some of the boys and girls that so dearly love the hiding places, are under the protection and leadership of her highness—the green-clad fairy queen.

It is needless to remind us of the influence that the mysterious and fictitious fairy tales had on religious faith. The children

used to learn as many fairy tales as the knowledge of their grand-parents would permit. And those stories in turn influenced all the activities of childhood.

The most delightful entertainment, on all important occasions, where people gathered together, was to have a charming, interesting story-teller. He was as popular in palaces as among the humblest peasants. And in those fairy-tale days the story-tellers and poets had freedom of speech.—Many of these entertainers were humble. They were not always “big men.”—

Some times the ministers of the gospel were excellent and humble story-tellers. And how they used to enjoy telling the beautiful fairy tales, of the dwarfs and the trolls—(“Dverga of trölla sögur). Until in recent years there was very limited opportunity to read anything to modify the influence of those fascinating fables.

Many of these stories were full of good humor and mirth. I will select, as example, the story when Asa Thor visited Utgarda-Loka. That fascinating narrative is to be found in the prose “Edda.” Only a short epitome will be quoted.

V.

SHORTLY before Thor arrived at the palace of Utgarda-Loki, he found a very big tent. It must be remembered that Thor was very big and powerful, as he was the god of strength in the Scandinavian mythology. Thor walked into this tent. It was getting dark, and he took possession with his party. They had some nourishment, Thor being famous as a "hearty" eater. They then went to sleep.

At midnight they were suddenly aroused from their slumber by what they believed to be an earthquake. *The earth seemed to be moving under them like the ocean in storm.* Thor was the first to wake up. He sprang to his feet, it was dark, he felt his way about, and to his astonishment, he found another smaller chamber, to the right of where they had been sleeping. "He what?" Yes, he went further into the tent and found another smaller bed-chamber. "Then what did he do?" He acted very suddenly. That was his hobby. He sent his companions—the members of his party into the smaller chamber. Thor was very particular about his friends, they were supposed to be brave, but the night was dark and this unexpected earthquake made them nervous, they were frightened.

Thor knew what to do, and he did not appear frightened—that is his friends could not see in the darkness if he was frightened or not.

Well, what did Thor do? He took possession, in the doorway—in the open space, there was no door—between the compartments, holding his famous big hammer “MJÖLNER.” When they had settled down again, they heard a terrible roaring noise. They thought it was an elephant or a lion, they did not know what to make of it.

At daybreak Thor went out to investigate what had caused all the terrible disturbance during the night. After looking around for a little while, he discovered a gigantic figure, asleep, a short distance away. Asa-Thor, the God of Strength and Courage, had never seen any “human” being so big before. What do you think this terrible troll was doing? He seemed to be sound asleep and snoring, not exactly like a lion, but it was a terrible sound. Thor did not like to listen—but the snoring of this troll had caused all the outrageous disturbance during the night.

Asa-Thor, the God of Strength, became very angry, and he raised his hammer to

the sky. He was not going to permit this troll to disturb him again. Neither was he going to have this troll frighten the noble members of his party. When Thor was ready to strike the snoring troll jumped up like a thunderbolt, and he spoke to Thor, just like a human being. He said to Thor in a friendly way, "I need not ask your name, because I know that you are Asa-Thor, the God of Strength." The troll acted as if he would like to recite over and over again, "The God of Strength—The God of Strength." The meanest performance of the troll was yet to be witnessed. He then inquired, quietly and politely, "Thor, where is my glove? Did you drag my glove away from me?" the inference in the question of the troll was: "How dare you do such a thing?" Thor then realized that he and his noble party had been sleeping in the glove of this troll. He, the God of Strength and Courage, had transferred his companions into the thumb of the glove. What had he been thinking about? He had felt and acted like a human being. He had thought that the thumb of the glove was a big chamber.

Thor had been angry when he raised his hammer to strike the sleeping stranger. Thor had met with mean treatment many times. He had quite natur-

ally been angry before, but he did not know, or remember that he had ever felt like a coward. As the troll arose and straightened himself to his full height, Thor saw how big and strong he was. It was said that this was the only time in Thor's earthly career when he was afraid.

Shortly after this experience with the mysterious gigantic troll, who was supposed to have been Utgarda-Loki in disguise, Asa-Thor came to the gates of a very beautiful city. The buildings were so high that Thor had to bend his head backward so that he could see the golden towers.

I said that I would only give a short epitome of Asa-Thor's experience with the cunning Utgarda-Loki. Interesting as these fairy tales are let us not follow Loki and Asa-Thor any further just now, as I shall not attempt to give an interpretation of their mysterious tricks.

VI.

MANY people find it very interesting to read about exploration. Explorers who discover unknown continents after heroic struggles—those who go out for geographical research work, battling with the eternal forces.

We do not know who the first explorer was, who first attempted to go to the ends of the earth to discover unknown lands. We do know, that it has been a long struggle. Countless numbers of lives have been sacrificed in the effort to discover the unknown parts of this earth, which we call our own. It is not unlikely that it will be surprising to future generations, how long it has taken the explorer to explore "our own little star!"

We have seen the maps, from different periods, made in recent years. Some of those maps were made from very crude sketches, according to how history enlightened the mind of those drawing the maps, about the gradual discoveries.

The oldest map, that I have seen, is dated 450 B.C. It is not necessary to explain how inaccurate that map is. Giving only very small portions of Europe and Asia. I have seen several maps covering the following 1400 years, and there is not much improvement. In all that time there was not much geographical discovery recorded. It was not until about the year 1000 A.D., that a portion of North America is to be found on the map. And not until in the 16th and 17th centuries, that crude outline

of "our" mother earth is visible—although very inaccurate.

It seems to me, that there is to be found, a very valuable illustration in this struggle of our forefathers, exploring their "own" little planet. Granted that they did most of their exploration (and exploitation), with brotherly love.—

During all these centuries, that the explorers have been struggling with geographical and other material research work, we have applied our intellect to the understanding of an "invisible" world. To the forces that surround us, visible and invisible. What has been our progress? That is a reasonable question to ask, but it would not be intelligent to expect a favorable answer. The finite mind can neither reason out or contest the infinite—the everlasting.

"And it is a good principle to remain agnostic in regions where knowledge is not definite."

I will attempt to make this clearer by an illustration. Several months ago I was conversing with a professional man, and he made a remark that he was not inter-

ested in abstract subjects. He was in earnest. I made no reply, but I did not like his positive, "I know it all" attitude. For a modest, educated (D.D., M.D. and Scotch) man, he impressed me as being a trifle arrogant.

"Not interested in the abstract." In abstract subjects? I was thinking about this remark for several days, and I asked myself the question, what kind of subjects (ethical?) can a finite mind settle indefinitely. I consulted a philosopher, a historian, an astronomer (botanist), I have been to church since I became so interested in finding something positive, ethically. I did not consult with a chemist. These great men could not help me, I could not find any subject that could be dealt with otherwise, than in the abstract. I am not in the least worried about the positive attitude of those "who know it all." Neither have I any dislike for the unbeliever. Since we do not know what wisdom and power there is in one cubic inch of space.

"It is exciting to contest nature, and our contest over nature is certainly reacting upon the mode of life, but a good many people are feeling a little skeptical about its advantages."—Julian Huxly.

Man differ from the other animals chiefly in this that he does keep in each generation what was acquired from its predecessor, and tested by him, and he passes it on to his successors.

When we view his march in perspective, we are astanished to see how little government has had to do with it.

It is individual progress in invention, discovery, thought, sentiment and better interpretation.

—Senator Gillett.

Probably human beings are in harmony with the everlasting, but can we take it for granted? And if we have, by breaking the laws of life, failed to take the right course, in seeking the light, then we must be satisfied with abstract subjects, until we are able to adjust ourselves.—Adjust our destiny.

It seems to be reasonable to suspect, that the future is somewhat uncertain. That we are not in “perfect” harmony, with the infinite—the eternal—which we do not understand.

The eternal forces annihilate us in our “earthly” condition. Probably superstition,

artificial, man-made methods of living have so impaired our relationship with eternal life, so as to classify us only in the abstract to the eternal law. Traditional faith and habits are powerful agents, for good and evil.

When we turn on the electric light, our understanding, our control over that mysterious agent is only in the abstract. There is not much doubt that light has power to transmit thought (and preserve thought), in a way that we can not understand or control. And the same is true about radio, and life itself. Is life in harmony? In unity with light? That we do not understand, we only have our faith and hope. Science is the breeze in the sail of faith on the ocean of life.

VII.

“**P**HYSICO—chemical knowledge has already given human nature a vast increase of control over non-living environments.”

Biological knowledge gives human nature a *promise* of control over itself.”—J. H.

Few men, if any, on this continent, have realized more fully, the truth of this statement of Julian Huxley, than Luther Burbank. WE trust that there will be many to continue this work for the benefit of the farmers.—The plants, in their varied forms, are the safest teachers.

The beautiful story in the Bible, which was supposed to take place in the Garden of Eden, is of great “economical” and educational “value.” There is not much doubt that the snake was wise. But to follow his wisdom unconditionally, the biologist (the honest-to-the-soil farmer who understands how to take care of his farm), of today would not be willing to do.

I submit that our understanding of the “Invisible” world, our understanding of the forces which *mother* nature works so skillfully, is as inaccurate and unreliable as the knowledge of our forefathers was in regard to the shape and size of the earth, 450 B.C. This is not surprising when we think of the means and methods applied.

We cannot contest life even when our methods are honest—based on noble faith. Finite humans are not trained or built up for that purpose.—Not yet.—Our means of analogy is in the abstract. Why? Be-

cause "few of us know how much we have to know, to know how little we know," that is one reason why we march through life as nature-fakers.

Someone said, "There is enough new truth here to make me believe that people in the twenty-first century are going to understand the relations between mind and body so well, that we shall appear in retrospect as hopelessly benighted."

We will learn to raise our voice earnestly, with devotion, to the colors we choose to worship. The spoken word has not the power to guide us as the sound, and the colors. We will learn to blend our voices in harmony and mix our colors without hate; without fear or favor. "What is that light that points the way to me?" Language is artificial. Color and sound is eternal.

"WHAT has this got to do with fairies and superstition?" I hear someone ask. Well; maybe it has not much to do with the fairies, probably, it has not much to do with superstition. Nevertheless the educators have had something to do with superstition, and the explorers could not find the poles without coming in contact with the fairies. I do

believe that some of the explorers knew something about superstition. Columbus may not have had the good fortune to come in personal contact with fairies so as to succeed in winning their friendship. I would not go so far as to say that Columbus himself was superstitious, but I am inclined to think that he was not free from suspicion. His friends and companions may not have suffered from suspicion. Did Columbus succeed in protecting them from superstition? If not, why not?

However, I will, in conclusion, try to come near to my text.

VIII.

Humanity has always enjoyed stories which bring in contact, the saint and the sinner. Philosophical, religious or humorous narratives of that nature never fail to get undivided attention.

Many stories have been told in Norway about the mysterious power manifested over Satan by the most highly honored Reverent Aurelious. Reverent Aurelious was the sacred and holy man in Norway at that time. That was in the early days of Christianity, centuries before Luther's reformation. It was before the Norweg-

ians decided to surrender themselves to Danish rule.

Of all the strange stories handed down to us through countless generations in Norway, very few are as fascinating as the story of the contract which the holy Rev. Aurelious made with Satan. The antiquated statistics disclose to us this interesting information, that there were a hundred clergymen in Norway at that time.

The fables do not agree whether Satan approached the clergyman or if the clergyman approached Satan. However, that was manipulated, the contract was made. Satan was to build the first municipally owned bridge over a rocky river in which many people had lost their lives. And, as a payment for his labor, Satan was to have the first soul that crossed the river on the new bridge.

Satan was somewhat like the trolls. He preferred to work at night. It was a great mystery to the clergyman where Satan could find the many colored rocks which he brought in for the foundation of the bridge. And how he could make such rapid progress with his work, apparently all alone.

When the minister arose at sunrise every morning, he was "paralyzed" with surprise, to witness how much work had been done during the night. The builder had always disappeared. The holy Aurelious prayed "day and night" for suggestion, for advice, as to who should make the supreme sacrifice. Who should first cross the bridge, be the victim, and go to the devil.

It was difficult, indeed, to decide between the saint and the sinner.

The saint would be "willing"—the saint would be ready to make the sacrifice. While the sinner would not be prepared. He would not be fit to face Peter and the Creator. Even if he was successful in getting away from Satan.

The clergyman would prepare them as best he could, "even at that" they might back out at the very last moment. The sinner might go to the end of the bridge, and then what? Then he would be more than likely, refuse to "come across" if he beheld Satan, the devil, at the other end. And how could he be assured that his saints would have faith to go across all alone?

The holy Aurelious knew that some of his sinners—members of his congregation—would be mortally afraid that if they

surrendered themselves to Satan, they would never, never get away. They would never escape from the God damned Devil. They would never reach the palace of Jehovah the King.

One morning, when Rev. Aurelious came out just before sunrise, he beheld Satan, he was standing on the other side of the river, at the far end of the bridge. He pointed his long bony finger at the minister, laughingly. His work was complete, the bridge was finished. The minister shrank back, when he came near enough to see the dark quizzical grin spread all over the long red face.

When the holy Aurelious came hesitating and slowly along the path leading to the bridge, Satan did not take his eyes off him. What was it that the clergyman carried in his right hand? Oh yes, it was a small bag, that's what it was, a small bag, but what was in this little bag? "Surely the holy Aurelious is not going to walk across the bridge himself and give up his own soul in "payment?" Satan the devil, said to himself. Oh no, the clergyman was not going to cross. He was standing now at the far end of the bridge. And he seemed to hesitate, then bending slowly, he opened the hand-bag, taking something out of it. See, some

little animal was crawling along the bridge toward Satan. At first Satan did not know what it was, but he found that out soon enough. It was a little gray dog, wagging his tail. A very friendly little dog it was.

This was an outrage. Satan the devil was furious as he beheld the little animal.

Looking across the bridge, Satan saw the minister with a very sweet smile on his face. He was not praying. He nodded his head to Satan, just as if he wanted to say to him: "There is your reward. The sun is now rising, you must make haste to go."

IX.

ON one side of the river and close to the bridge, was a steep mountain.

Satan turned away from the bridge, climbing up the mountain with the little gray dog behind him. It was a good-natured little dog, and he wanted to be friendly. But Satan paid no attention, he did not even know the dog's name, nor did he have enough respect for the dog to give him a new name.

When Satan reached the summit, he turned toward the bridge with a very large rock in his long arms, ready to hurl it

down and destroy the bridge. Then what did he see? He then realized that he was too late. The glorious sunshine had destroyed his power.

Rev. Aurelious, dressed in his ecclesiastical uniform, with his congregation behind him was passing over the bridge, consecrating it to God and the service of His children.

Satan dropped the big rock, which disappeared into the ground, directly in front of him. And he said to himself: "Surely Rev. Aurelious is a minister of labor and justice. Where can I find the other ninety-nine?"

The minister was alone in his study. He was thinking, he was glad that the bridge was completed. His contract with Satan had been successful. Like a thunderbolt from the clouds it all came back to him. He had been discussing the bridge building with the master of the dark ages. Satan did not want money. He did not want gold. Satan had opened a little red-hot stove in the study and pulled out a flaming coal, and handed it to him. "Don't be afraid," he exclaimed, as the minister hesitated. Satan turned the coal over in his hand, very calmly. The minister was

astonished to see that the coal had changed into a lump of gold.

He remembered how uneasy he had been when he took the gold in his hand. He held it for a brief moment, then he wanted to return it to Satan, who merely shook his grizzled head and refused to take it. How uncomfortable he had been when he held the gold in his hand. He felt just as if an evil spirit was taking possession of his soul.

What had he done with that lump of gold? Where was it? Oh yes, he remembered, he had placed it in a little drawer in his desk where he kept his money. This little drawer had been empty sometimes.

When he opened the drawer he found the gold where he had placed it. He took it from the drawer and held it in his hand again. Lo, and behold," he screamed, he was in agony. The shining beautiful lump of gold had turned into a flaming coal again, and burned the clergyman's hand, so the scar remained until his dying day.

It is not always superb pure metal that shines.

New York
on
St. Patrick's Day,
1929.

*Who are you dusky woman, so ancient,
hardly human—*

*With your wooly-white and turban'd head,
bare bony feet?*

*Why, rising by the roadside here, do you
the colors greet?*

—Walt Whitman.

“SMOTHER LOVE”

“OF all the selfishness, the greatest is that of the much eulogized mother, the woman absorbed in her children, whom we have idealized from the beginning of history. It is, as we shall see, a selfishness that is all the more dangerous because it is so wrapped in *sentimentality*, that, by sapping the stamina and self-confidence of children, affects the nation.”
—Beatryce Barmby.

After reading this first paragraph, in the August number of Pictorial Review, I was wondering if the writer intended to demonstrate her ability with satire of some of the highly cultured foreign nations. It is a pleasant relaxation and relief to read books by some of the celebrated foreign writers, forgetting all about devoted and skillful printers wasting their valuable time, expensive black ink and paper for copy and text books. It is true that some native American writers use satire charmingly.

I changed my mind before reading on B.B.'s “Smother Love,” mother analogy. She is not going to demonstrate her abil-

ity with satire this time. She would not choose American "Smother" (mother) love as a subject for satire. Probably she means to break into highly entertaining humor of the Mark Twain type. That would be different. That would be refreshing, indeed.

It is always disappointing, even when reading works of fine art, when one is forced to change one's "own" mind about the motives and meaning of the writer.

From my boyhood days I always had great admiration for Mark Twain. If B.B. was coming up to his style, I would not be sorry. I would not suffer regret for changing my mind. I had seen the name, Beatrice Barmby, over some writing, over some article before, and, after considerable amount of hard thinking, I had some recollection of having been favorably impressed at that time. Just as likely as not B.B. would compete with any humorist. She would not be afraid competing with the famous humorist, Will Rogers. It must be acknowledged right here, that one is liable to gain the impression, after reading Roger's work of American art that his heaven is bright, and with many mansions. He is sometimes just funny—as a humorist should be. It is (or it seems to be),

also true W.R. is somewhat lacking in force and beauty. He has travelled to many foreign lands, and nobody knows how the foreign influence has affected his American literary heaven. Rogers is, (or was), without doubt, a philosopher, even if his devoted fellow students and other admirers keep to their old style of reading Emerson.

As Mark Twain's humor and his charming democratic style seems to be out of fashion in our highly cultured times, I was hopeful. So I kept right on reading B.B.'s "Smother" Love. The first paragraph had not made me happy—or at least I know perfectly well that I could not fool myself to believe that I was happy. Nevertheless I was not sorry that I had changed my mind.

I was wondering if the composer was going to recommend that North American mothers should give their babies to foreign nurses at birth, only to see them week-ends, when they felt like it. Now that American women are at last taking their proper and dignified places, politically, if the babies were out of harm's way, so "foolish, sentimental mothers" would no longer waste their emotions on them, then they would be entirely free to study the underlying principles of democratic form of govern-

ment, Republican culture, and tradition. Democratic form of government can give to the public, anything—liberty, wisdom, prosperity, (monopoly—despotism)—anything they choose to support.

To prevent possible misunderstanding, I must make that clear, that, far be it from my good character to cast any disagreeable reflection on the democratic traditions and Missionary work of the Republican party. I just good-naturedly thought of the Republican party as a fitting and proper far-reaching and important subject, for efficient and highly interesting study for all well-informed mothers. The famous historical Republican party should be the women's party—just now—for “sound” scientific information. You ask me “Why?” Because it has been so long in power.—Is not that a “charming” and “logical” methodical way of reasoning?

II.

THERE is not much doubt that I am not the only one to get into the bad habit of not reading magazine articles from beginning to end. But I had made up my mind to read “Smother Love” through, and since I had been so fortunate as to find it interesting, at the beginning,

it should not be difficult—it should not worry me, to finish it. The trouble began, however, when I realized that it was absolutely essential to read some of the passages more than once, and even then I was not so “firmly” convinced that I had found the right meaning—the meaning that Beatrice Barmby wanted to record in her “Smother Love.”

But I kept on reading, nevertheless. For the benefit of those that did not see “Smother Love”—or any of B.B.’s writing, I quote the following sentence: “She is an inadequate mother—and this is the very worst of her. In her sentimental devotion, untempered by the hard steel of common-sense, she allows her children to grow up without the faintest glimmer of the meaning of endurance or discipline.”

To permit beautiful and lovely babies to grow up without understanding the meaning of “endurance or discipline,” is very dangerous, even when mothers keep up the “bad habit of thinking for their babies,” and “fighting their battles.” Every mother thinks her baby is beautiful and lovely, and so they should. But why B.B. is so bitter (probably I am not using the right word) against sentiment? Is there not to be found any sentiment in her

patriotism—or in her love for her country and nation? There are some people foolish enough to believe that sentiment is difficult to understand, and that it has a manifold meaning. Faith must have sentimental support. You cannot reason out to yourself what faith is, and much less can you reason it out to anybody else. It seems to me that it is difficult to draw the line between faith and sentiment. EMOTIONAL LIFE of individuals and nations must be supported by sentiment.

Patriotism to a nation—to the land of our fathers and mothers—to life's mysterious forces, is primarily based on sentiment. "How do you feel about it?" "How do I feel about it," is a common, and a very natural question for a finite mind to ask when facing and battling with infinite forces.

It seems rather difficult to imagine love without sentiment; every individual seems to have a different meaning for love and sentiment. The famous Short Story book, better known as the standard dictionary, could not completely satisfy the devoted inquiring mind of man. Dr. Frank Crane gives the following interpretation of love:

“Once there was a very rich man who had three daughters. He asked each of them: How much do you love me? One said, I love you as life. Another said, better than all the world. The third answered, however, Why, daddy, I love you as fresh meat loves salt.” The father did not like the answer of his third daughter.

Could the standard dictionary give satisfactory explanation through the efficient mind of Beatryce Barmby, or any other artist, of the sentimental love—or love without sentiment—of the three daughters? It seems very likely that the three sisters underwent a wether-test. Their sentiment was wholesome.—

III.

Women are superior to men, if they succeed in keeping their love and affections sane and pure. The motherly instinct is the most sublime, inspiring and devotional expression in human being.

Humanity has not learned the very difficult task of properly preparing girls for motherhood. Is civilization improving the standard of motherhood?

It is the height of folly to criticize mothers for being "selfish and sentimental and inefficient," unless the critic at the same time analyzes the reasons by looking into the *background*.

There does not seem to be any doubt that even those mothers who did not receive much education (and I am just a little uneasy when using that high sounding word education), or those members of the fair sex not giving much credit for character strength. Even mothers laboring under such difficulties use higher and more wholesome "sentiment" and devotion when "thinking and fighting" for their children than in anything else during their life.

B.B. continues: "It is time we realized that motherhood is not sentimental obsession, but practical business which requires much clear thought. It is time we realized, too, that youth today can no longer be held by those old and most useful catch-words: gratitude, obedience, duty. We have need of sane mothers. We have need of mothers who will use their brains more than their mother instincts."

If this sentence would be dealt with at length, it might serve as an interesting text for a volume or two. With few iso-

lated exceptions, women are half crazy unless they can adjust themselves to motherhood. If they have no offspring of their own they must have some other "object" to love and mother.

When a mother fails to keep her love, and sensibility sane and pure, in the "old-fashioned historical" style, she becomes sour and bitter and indifferent to many of life's highest instincts. Her affection in such a condition is only fit for dogs and cats. It is a well known fact that dogs and cats owned by those "sane and efficient women"—and loved by them in a measure, they are not very happy animals.

THOSE women, who never had the good fortune to give birth to and bring up a child of their own—and thus glorify motherhood—they are sometimes honest, brilliant and beautiful, but, if they failed to protect the honest to God—honest to creation instinct of motherhood, their strength of character cannot grant to them the privilege, to be as loyal and devoted—wholesome friends and companions.

B.B.'s "Smother Love" is written in a style of an accomplished debater, and not for educational purposes. And if it was not meant to be for educational purpose it

would have been a better "bargain" for the reader (for the dear public), if there had been more display of humor—*or satire*.—Don't you know.—frequently, it is true the debater, one-sided as most of them are they succeed in giving "practical" and "efficient" suggestions. But unless the audience holds the balance of power—intellectually, and holds on to it gracefully, the educational value is not likely to support "common" sense, or to be of much value for any peace conference.

Political propaganda artists are sometimes very interesting, and when there is a large and well-dressed audience, it is very comfortable to be present if there is a fine soft seat available.

Political debaters are skilled in the art of using fine words, and explaining the agricultural condition, on one side of the barbed wire fence. The writer has had the good fortune to listen to some of the old-fashioned mothers deliver political speeches. Some of them displayed too much party sentiment, that was my faith—I do believe to be true. And those that supported independence sometimes forgot to be "*practical*" and consistent (?) Nevertheless, it would be interesting to have an opportunity to listen to a greater number,

of the sane, devoted, old-fashioned mothers,
deliver orations concerning life's big issues.

B.B. is correct in her contention that mothers should take broader interest in *life*, but she is wrong insofar as she attempts to discredit the motherly instinct, because it is from ethical standpoint the noblest and most inspiring instinct in human nature.

Long Beach, California,
1928.

On a Rainy Day after the Famous Election in Scotland⁽¹⁾

IT is now devotedly and sincerely rumored that the famous Socialist leader, Ramsey McDonald, is "planning" a journey to Mexico as a delegate at large, to a Methodist Peace Disarmament Conference. Several farmers in Scotland and Ireland have been requested by invitation, to go to this Conference, but this is a busy season. The farmers could not very well find time to leave their turnips and Sunday schools, even for a timely excursion and picnic in Norway. Norway has always had a reputation for being economical. Nevertheless that little kingdom used to cultivate the habit of inviting foreign delegates and paying their expenses.

1. *This paper is most respectfully dedicated to an old Pennsylvania Dutch friend, whose ancestors immigrated to New Amsterdam.—The Author.*

Where the Eskimos inhaled their spiritual sentiment or hospitality, we are not in a position to tell. Whether the Norse Vikings had anything to do with that Missionary Work, we do not know.—The Scotch are not far away from Eskimo land.

The gist of the event is that the Eskimos are the most hospitable people in the world. They are democratic, they believe in free trade and socialism.—

We overheard someone on the main thoroughfare of the Capitol of Manitoba express the opinion that the Republic of Ireland should send a free state free trade Socialistic delegate to this Peace and Disarmament Convention in Mexico. Well, how about it? Why shouldn't they do so if they can find someone that can spare the time. Someone who is sociable, socialistically inclined, and has no desire to spend the summer holidays in the open spaces. a—Would Snow Desmond be available? If he had a guarantee from all the federal authorities in Europe and America (South and North), that his mail would not get mixed up with anybody else's mail while he was away from home.

II.

Now that Bonny Scotland has a premier who promised to be a free-trade-Socialist,

and he is not a Welshman either. If we understand his policy correctly, it means that all kings are born equal, including those who write their names with McK.

The question has been raised how many of the newly established republics in the frozen north will dare to take part in this Disarmament Conference in Mexico?

It is widely reported that the historic commonwealth republic, best known as Iceland, is planning some big celebration. Delegates and committees have been appointed.

The Icelanders are "some kickers," believe me. They have a flag all their own. Who made the original design remains a mystery at this writing. Just imagine a little country with only about one hundred thousand thoroughbred (more or less), inhabitants, pulling the leg of a Danish King like natives. True, the Danes have been socialistically inclined, particularly in foreign affairs. They lost badly in a shooting contest.

You ask me who was the winner, and I answer without hesitation, that I am not going to give away any state secrets that has taken place outside of this continent. If I fell into the habit of quoting ancient history, there is no telling it might lead me to give away secrets that would not, and could not, be included in my personal busi-

ness. So there you are. What is the use of kicking? I will say, however, that there are prominent men, big men, too, who are interested in finding out what little Iceland is going to do about Mexican affairs.

III.

We have been secretly informed that this year of the Lord, 1929, is the correct astronomical time for Disarmament Conference in Brazil. "Why?" Because the overwhelming majority of bootleggers are said to be bankrupt.

Could the Irish Free State Republic organize a Disarmament Peace Conference somewhere in South America if Scotland paid the expenses?

There is no doubt that the natives of America will rejoice to have such a prominent Scotsman as Ramsay McDonald coming to the shore anywhere on this continent. We also realize that it must be a sacrifice for him to do so even if his expenses are paid. Since Lloyd George is a free-trader and that he could probably better spare the time during the summer holidays, why not pay his expenses or part of his income tax, and let him "come across?"

If you want to test your character, after you have counted your week's profit, ask

your tailor to measure your superior complex, and make you a suit of imported modesty. Take a bath in traditional egotism.—“Oh! is that so?”—Yes, my dear, but you must not forget your barber.—Simplicity is the only modern-‘ism!’—

IV.

REFLECTIONS OF A CONVERTED
BOOTLEGGER.

“**I** HEAR a mighty rumbling under-
ground,
It is de ole debil turnin’ aroun’.”

“What can be the meaning of these
Shadows all?”—

John Jhon gives them a sip of liquor
And lets them talk to G-O-D.—

I K N O W—
Sluggish cunning devils,
Planning for posterity—
Spirited activity—
Superior fraternity?
Knowing all eternity—
Through SCOTLAND YARD
CHRISTIANITY—
—Drunk in home-town brewery.
“Ah, what?”

Superior fraternity?
Spirited activity—
Knowing all eternity—
Planning for posterity.
Through SCOTLAND YARD
CHRISTIANITY.
—Drunk in home-town brewery.
“Where?”—in BRITAIN—“Y.”

“Our great day,
We are glad—
The Jews are sad.”

On Jerusalem’s day,
The Jews are glad.
—“We” are sad.

“Jhon gave me a sip of liquor—
He told me to talk to G-O-D.”

Winnipeg, Man.
7-6-'29

